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UNDER THE WAR CLOUD IN THE BALKANS

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ON August 28, 1910 (harking back to history), his Ferocity, the three-score-and-ten-year-old fighting Prince of a certain fighting principality down in that unhappy southeastern corner of Europe, having called unto his isolated and exiguous capital the representatives of every European Power he could reach by telegraph, Government mail or nimble courier, walked out into the middle of the street in his picturesque native comic opera jamada and shalwar and declared himself king and all that went with it—just to teach some people (no names mentioned) a lesson in high handed diplomacy.

It was a clever little finesse; a subtle piece of statesmanship. For 500 years his nation had been the dummy in the European political auction bridge party. It had often held a good hand, to be sure, but always some one else had been playing it. Its three aces—valor, patriotism and topographical impregnableness—had been the real means of holding down the score of its opponents, the Turks; in all those 500 years they had never once gained a permanent foothold on Montenegrin territory, and in 500 years to come they never will. Then the players pivoted.

Servia, one of the old time partners, broke away from the dummy triumvirate and established a long suit. She overbid her hand and in the end lost two tricks to Austria, Bosnia and the Herzegovina. Even a little slam and Servia would have won. As it was, she lost the first leg of the new rubber.

Bulgaria was the next to follow, successfully promoting her insignificant Prince to the exalted position of Czar of all the Bulgars. Turkey threw down its hand forthwith, and the second leg was won by a small margin. This gave one leg to each side, with Turkey and Austria playing harder than ever for the final decision.

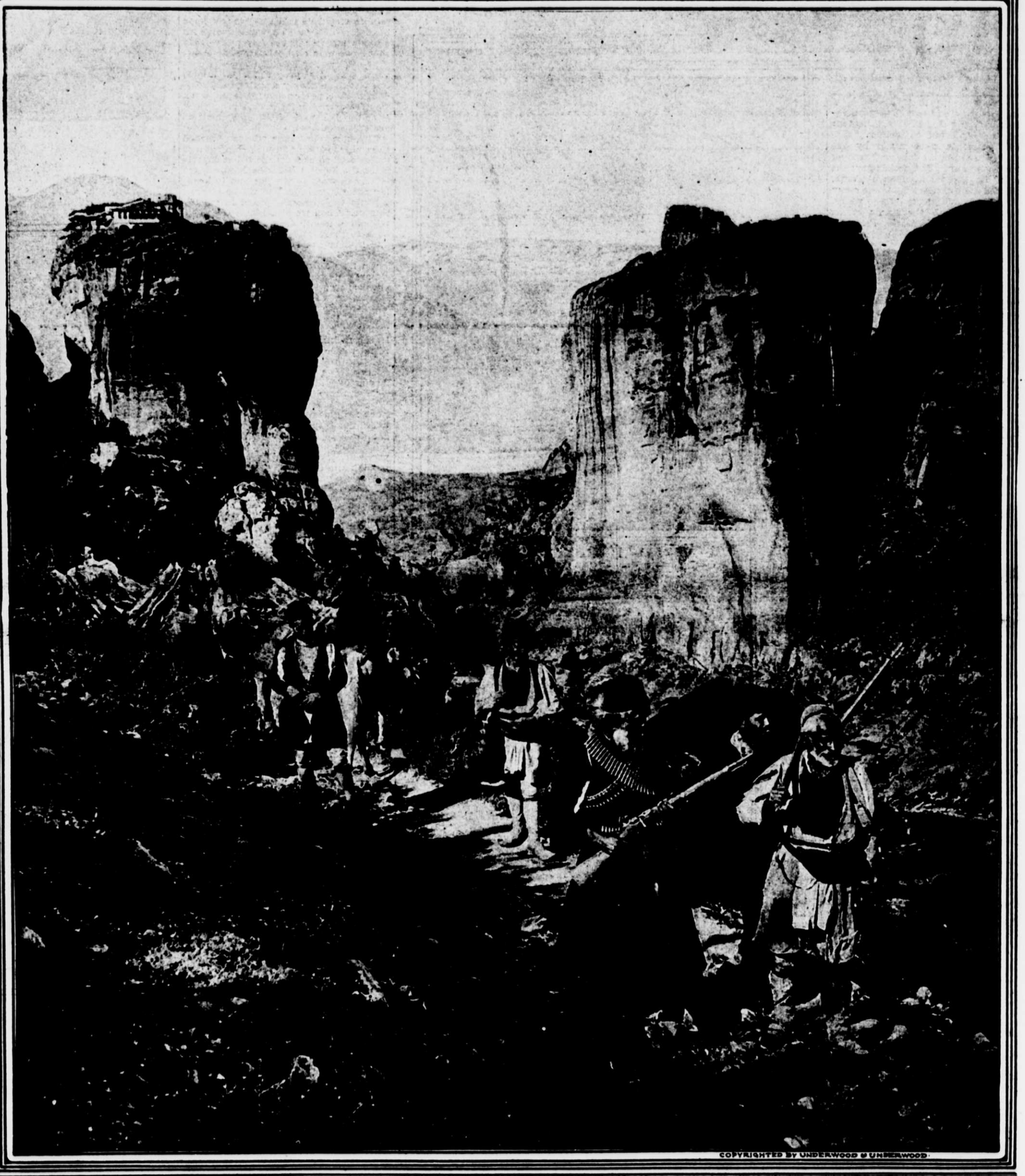
Then the ruler of the nation referred to in the first paragraph hit upon a plan for strengthening his suit. He would tighten a little more securely the tie that already bound the Slav nations of Europe. In addition he would raise himself to the level of his son-in-law, the King of Italy, creating thereby a more friendly feeling between them. The move would be especially advantageous inasmuch as the son-in-law was bound by the now famous Triple Alliance (or infamous, according to the viewpoint of the reader) to second any move made by the little principality's most aggressive opponent—Austria. It would place the son-in-law in an uncomfortable position of doubt whether to stand by his signature or break the treaty and fight for father.

And so Nikola thought it timely and entirely within the bounds of the etiquette of international politics to proclaim himself king of the smallest and most sterile monarchy in the world, fittingly called Montenegro, the Land of the Black Mountain. Do you catch the significance of this move of Nikola's to advance his country from a principality into a kingdom?

Before the buds appear in the spring, dear reader, there is every reason to believe that you shall see the transition of the Turk from Europe. The Turk is persona non grata west of the Bosporus. Greek, Albanian, Macedonian, Rumanian, Bulgarian, Montenegrin and Serb alike hate and despise him. He is their common enemy, and has been since the battle of Kossovo, in 1389. Over an excuse to make war upon him the Balkan States, individually and collectively, have been scratching their shaggy heads in secret council, but Madam Diplomacy always peeped through the keyhole at an inopportune moment and shouted "Children, keep quiet!" It certainly was exasperating.

But one bright day Turkey became involved in a little altercation over in Africa. Reports had it that Italy gave her a bloody nose and was bruising her up no little. So while interest in the outcome grew apace among the Powers, what did they do in the Balkans? They did this: They got together and picked out of the files two very commendable excuses to pounce upon Turkey—that she must be more careful in her treatment of Christians in Macedonia and Albania and that she should grant these provinces autonomous government. While Madam Diplomacy took a siesta it would be a good chance, they thought, to stop up the keyhole.

One of them, of course, would have to take the initiative, and the big boys decided to "let George do it." But George (of Greece) refused. The plot thickened. What was to be done? Somebody had to start something. How about Nikola? They asked him, being as he had a particular aversion to anything in a fez. He would be dee-lighted. Nothing would please him better—nothing; and before the sun had set he handed the Turkish charge in Cettinje his passports and wired the Montenegrin charge in Constantinople to tell the Turks to go to—and come home. And Madam Diplomacy awoke to find the Turk with the Italian terrier still dangling from his baggy breeches, squaring about to defend himself against the bad boys of Europe.



A Scouting Party of the Allied Forces

But what about Montenegro? What does she look like? What of her peoples?

Suppose you and I come down to brass tacks about Montenegro, the aggressor, the gamecock of the Balkans.

It may have taken 500 years of fighting to dissuade the Mohammedans from settling in Montenegro, but it would take only a few hours carriage drive to persuade you or me not to accept the country as a gift. Its thirty-five hundred square miles covers a territory scarcely three times as great in extent as the State of Rhode Island and not one-tenth as fertile; in the whole length and breadth of it there is not a railroad, although the project has been abroad for some time to build a line from Antivari, on the coast, to Virbazaar, a short distance inland; but a scant half of the great Lake of Scutari belongs to it, the other half piercing Albania; the value of its annual exports, consisting of tobacco, dried meats, several hides and a few fish, aggregates $1,040,000, while the value of its imports amounts to $1,375,000. The chief assets of the kingdom are its excellent tobacco and the view from the top.

Although by virtue of the treaty of Berlin Montenegro was generously presented with all of twenty-five miles of seacoast adjoining Albania, through the little white walled Dalmation town of Cattaro comes and goes by wagon train twenty-eight miles across the mountains to and from its miniature capital the bulk of the country's trade and commerce. Cattaro, best reached by steamer from Trieste or Fiume, is its front door.

The village clings with tightened tendrils to the base of Mount Lovcen like a cluster of edelweiss at the foot of an Alpine crag, while its fjordlike harbor, the famous Bocche di Cattaro, is the most wonderfully fortified by nature of any in the world. Lofty, barren peaks rise on every side from the water's very edge, perpetually screening the little town from all but five scanty hours of sunlight during the course of a winter's day. The neck of one of the innermost bottle shaped harbors of the Bocche is so narrow that it used to be familiarly known as La Catene, from the fact that when Lewis of Hungary was defending Cattaro against the Venetians he sealed up this entrance against the caravels of the enemy by stretching a chain across it.

From Cattaro to the Montenegrin frontier the Austrians have built a road—one of the finest roads in Europe, that required twenty years and an enormous sum of money to complete—a wide, hard, stone buttressed road, which zigzags by easy stages up the almost perpendicular face of the mountain of rock like a white silken thread on the shoulder of a giant. It is such a road of course that permits the easy and speedy transport of Austrian troops and Austrian field pieces should the occasion demand.

Leaving Cattaro, the road borders the harbor for a short distance, winds in and out among the olive studded foothills, through avenues of stately poplar and cypress trees, crosses the shallow Gordicchio by an attractive bridge and sweeps with such decision toward the south that you are really driving away from the mountain that you must scale later. Ahead is the broad, fertile plain of Garbalj, and beyond that the restless, undulating Adriatic shimmers in the sunlight. At the top of the pass leading to the town of Budua the road literally overhangs the farm land below as it winds around the face of the cliff. Then suddenly it turns to attack the side of the Black Mountain much as if having just executed some delicate bit of strategy in order to effect an approach.

Half way to the summit stands a little stone shelter house perched jauntily at one of the acute angles of the winding highway. The view of the Bocche di Cattaro from this point would be satisfying enough if the traveller failed to foresee the fact that grander and more beautiful ones were in store for him, for already he will have climbed as high as the tops of the mountains on the opposite side of the bay from Cattaro. But he pushes on, eager to gain the more comprehensive panoramas that unfold themselves in quick succession simultaneously with the attainment of each angle of the circuitous roadway.

By the time you reach the pass at the top of the mountain which marks the Montenegrin frontier the sun, grotesquely distorted by refraction, will be dipping its rosy edges into the murmuring Adriatic. Deep shadows of the mountains will have so successfuly engulfed the Bocche that you seem to be looking into the depths of a great cistern with its coping tinted a gorgeous old rose. Down at the bottom of the pit a fancy little white steamboat starts out boldly from the building block village of Cattaro across the miniature mirror lake toward the narrow exit to the sea. It moves very slowly, churning the placid waters into a fan shaped ruffle. You see it so plainly and it seems so near that you half imagine you could reach over and pick it up by the smokestack.

The strange, abysmal silence of it all, heightened by the lugubrious pipings of a lone Montenegrin shepherd off somewhere in the mountains, grips your soul and draws it into a closer and more intimate communion with the Creator of the scene before you. It is really one of the most impressive views in the world.

The view of the Montenegrin side of the mountain is—well, it is principally and purely "Montenegrin."

There is a story told that when the good Lord was fashioning this oblate spheroid of ours He passed above this part of the then unfinished topography carrying a bag of stones destined for other latitudes. Above the present kingdom of Montenegro the bag burst, and you who travel across the Black Mountain will be able to comprehend the result without half trying.

At the first glimpse it would be impossible to imagine a stonier place than Montenegro. It looks like a rough sea petrified. As you approach the capital, however, topographical conditions become more and more soothing, and the broad vale of Cettinje, as seen from the heights, resembles nothing so much as a valley of truck farms back in Pennsylvania.

While the twilight still lingers, an hour or more after you have passed the summit of the mountain, you will come to the little red roofed village of Njegushi—only a cluster of hump-backed stone houses stuck in between the rocks. Not even a king can choose his own birthplace, and here in the anomalous village of Njegushi his Royal Highness King Nicola first saw the light in 1841.

As you drink your cup of tea on the stone platform which the village innkeeper of Njegushi pleases to call his "porch" you will have your first impression of the type of men who have been able to retain their country against the invading Turks for a period covering five centuries. I doubt very much if there may be found in the whole world more strapping examples of the genus homo than the Montenegrins. Almost to a man they are physically perfect, and their costume helps the observer to form a very fair idea of what a real man's physique looks like.

This national garb of the men of Montenegro consists of a small pepper box cap (kapitza), embroidered in gold on the top with the King's initials; a red waistcoat (jalek), and a richly embroidered zouave jacket (jamada), worn under a long, white or light blue cloak of broadcloth (dolama or gunj); loose blue knickerbockers (shalwar); and sandals (opanka). A dark colored plaid shawl (struka) is thrown carelessly over the shoulder, and a girdle of fancy material encircles the waist, from the lower edge of which protrude the shining muzzles of a number of formidable firearms and the points of scarcely less formidable yataghans.

The first Montenegrin I ever saw was the messenger of the Montenegrin Embassy at Sofia, in Bulgaria. He augmented the costume described in detail above with an accordion pleated skirts of immaculate white, knee length, like that of a member of the ballet in the second act. He was the huskiest looking human I believe I ever envied, and I determined then and there that if there were any more at home like him, kind sir, I was going to have a look at the rest of the nation. I was not disappointed.

The Montenegrins are a race of warriors. They are brave, but cruel; proud, but vain; chivalrous, patriotic, revengeful and lazy. Endowed in a great degree with the cardinal domestic virtues of frugality, sobriety and chastity, they are naturally well mannered and hospitable; but a stranger among them is often considered an interloper.

While their physical type has developed in contrast to that of the Servians—the features more pronounced, the hair darker, and the stature much greater—the poetic temperament of their ancestors, the Servians, is hereditary with them. Like the primitive race that they are, as yet little affected by the trend of the times, their favorite pastime is recanting their martial achievements; for with them personal bravery is still regarded as the highest possible virtue, and prowess in wartime constitutes practically the only medium by which to aspire to local preeminence.

For five centuries their chief end has been to fight the Turk and keep him out of their mountain home. In this they have been eminently successful, partly on account of the impregnableness of their country, partly on account of record mobilization of troops on the frontiers. It is an acknowledged fact that Montenegro's entire military force of 42,000 men might be strung along the danger zone of invasion within four or five days at the most.

But let me warn you, Miss American Heiress, unless you know how to milk a goat and carry two buckets of water at the same time (not contemporaneous with the milking of the goat, however) and can till the soil with a hand plough, don't ever marry a Montenegrin. You would have to do all of these tricks in the Land of the Black Mountain, not to mention trudging away down to the market in Cattaro once a week, accompanied by a basketful of garden truck and bringing up the family to boot. While you are doing these trivial chores your theatrical husband will be strutting about the village smoking long cigarettes, toying with the infant arsenal he carries in his belt, and enjoying himself generally.

From the appearance of the women of Montenegro their lot is no sinecure. They are tolerated, and that is all. Frequently comely in youth, they age rapidly, and even at their majority are short and stunted and bent, owing to the drudgery imposed upon them from early childhood. In wartime it falls to their lot to supply the commissariat and carry the ammunition. Sons are taught from earliest infancy to cultivate belligerent proclivities and to despise the weaker sex. The mother possesses little influence.

Even the feminine garb befits the

Continued on Seventh Page.